

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS

A toolkit for success

GUARDIANS
OF
HEALTH AND
SAFETY

Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	5
HSE Stress Management Standards	6
Know it	7
Employer Engagement	9
Data	10
Identify It	12
The HSE Stress Management Standards	12
Health and Safety Indicator Tool	14
Analysis of Results	17
Tackle it	19
Organisational Systems	20
Support and Review	21
Resources	22
Top Tips for Employee Engagement with the HSE Stress Indicator Tool	24
Powerpoint presentation notes reproduced for an Introductory Stress at Work event	25
Initial Stress Survey Questions	33
Data Checklist	34
Useful links	35

Foreword

Stress and the management of mental health in the workplace is becoming one of the biggest health concerns.

According to UNISON's 2017 survey on stress, demands on time were the biggest cause of workplace stress.

However, with over 60% of employers failing to raise the issue of stress in the workplace it is clearly not being tackled.

UNISON safety reps are trained and equipped to raise issues with employers in the workplace and this toolkit is here to support their work.

It includes information on how to work with employers to ensure they fulfil their legal obligations and advice on how to help workers to be open about their stress-related issues.

The current fashionable 'resilience agenda' is not the answer to stress: instead we need good systems and strong leadership from employers dedicated to improving the working lives of their employees.

Employers need to understand that public sector workers have been under pressure for too long and the pressure is turning to stress. They must do something to manage it.

UNISON safety reps campaign effectively to improve stress management in the workplace.

We are the guardians of health and safety – guarding against stress.

Dave Prentis
General Secretary

This toolKIT for success provides the helpful acronym:
'Know it, Identify it, Tackle it' (KIT). The guide explains the three stages in guarding against stress.

Know it

Identify it

Tackle it

Introduction

Stress is a hazard in the workplace just like any other – and must be risk assessed like any other hazard. Stress can also manifest itself in other ways – some that may not be obvious.

How many times a day do we hear someone (even ourselves!) say “This is stressing me out” or “I am so stressed!” What do we really mean? Are we really stressed or just under pressure?

To answer that question requires us to know exactly what stress is, or more to the point – our employers need to know exactly what stress is and how they should be managing stress at work.

Stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as “**The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work.**” Stress is not an illness – it is a state. When pressure becomes too excessive or prolonged, mental and physical illness may develop (that’s the adverse reaction otherwise known as stress).

Well-designed, organised and managed work is generally good for us but when insufficient attention to job design, work organisation and management has taken place, it can result in **work-related stress**.

Work-related stress develops because a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as more errors.

(HSE 2017)

Stress accounted for 11.7 million working days lost in 2015/16. This equated to an average of 23.9 days lost per individual (LFS/HSE, 2016) and the cost to the workforce is beginning to have an impact on the well being of the workforce.

(LFS / HSE 2016)

HSE Stress Management Standards

The HSE stress management standards list six key areas which if not managed effectively, can be “stressors” and have an impact on our stress levels from work.

The six areas are:

- 1. Demands:** **workloads, conflicting priorities, unrealistic deadlines, emotional demands.**
- 2. Control:** **how much a worker can organise the way they do their work.**
- 3. Relationships:** **this includes a positive working environment, and procedures for managing conflicts and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.**
- 4. Support:** **the support and encouragement workers get from their employer, manager and colleagues.**
- 5. Role:** **managers ensuring workers understand their roles and that these roles do not conflict.**
- 6. Change:** **how employers manage and communicate organisational change including consultation.**

It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that these areas are managed effectively to prevent or control exposure to the stressors to keep stress at work to a minimum.

This toolkit provides you with the tools to understand what stress is, to be able to establish the levels of stress from work and to negotiate with employers on how to minimise its damaging effects.

The Role of the Safety Rep in Managing Stress at Work

Safety reps play a vital role in the workplace. They have legally protected functions which provide them with the opportunity to identify issues and deliver improvements in members' everyday working lives.

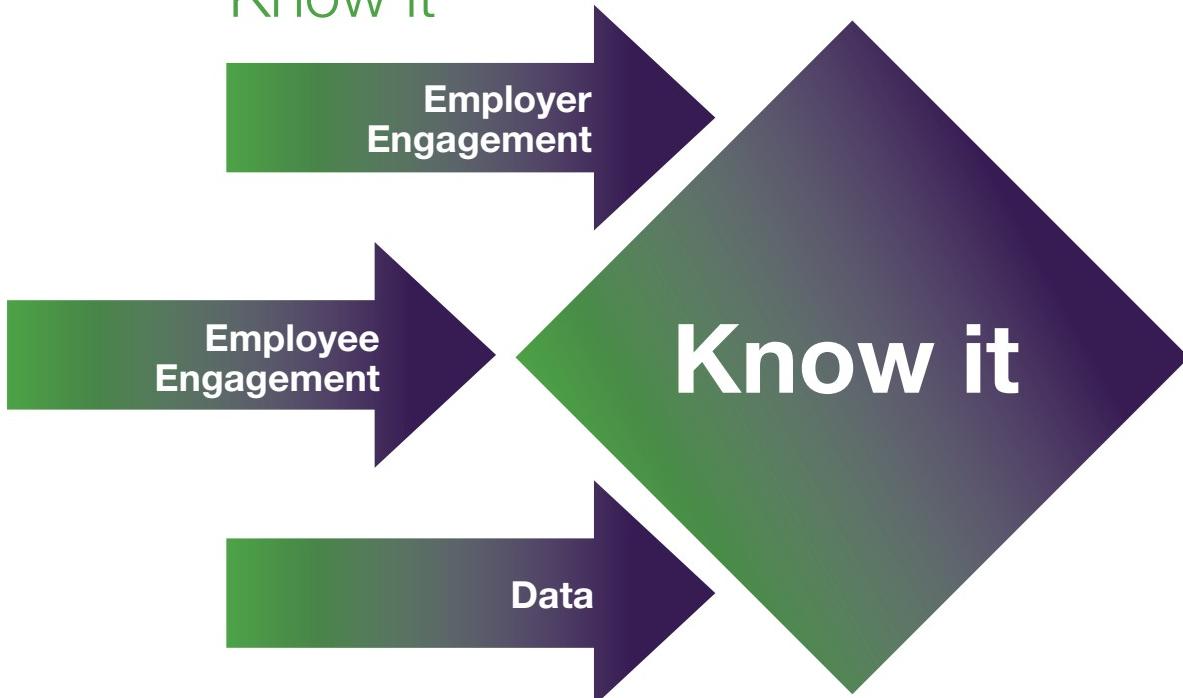
Stress is one of those areas where the safety rep's knowledge, understanding and ability to access all levels of the organisation is invaluable in making sure the issue is high on the employer's agenda.

Employers' Legal Responsibilities in Managing Stress at Work

Employers have the same legal requirement to manage work-related stress as they have with any other hazard.

The **1974 Health and Safety at Work Act/Order** requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees. The **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999** requires employers to assess the risks of ill health (including stress-related conditions) arising from work-related activities, ensuring that the hazards are removed or proper control measures are put in place to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practical.

Know it



Some employers already recognise that stress is an issue in the workplace. Unfortunately, not all employers do.

There are ways of making it easier to recognise the problem. Just talking about stress in the workplace can begin to address the stigma often attached to mental health issues caused by stress. This may be a start to bring about some positive changes.

In order to recognise stress in the workplace, employers and safety reps may have to "find" it. There are a few places that we can look and also some help we can enlist.

Stress may be categorised as medical conditions such as depression or anxiety. Some employers monitor reasons for sickness absence. This is useful data and activists should be requesting information from employers and looking at any trends highlighted by this data.

A recent survey of UNISON members suggest the following issues are causing stress or undue pressure in the workplace

Is pressure at work linked to any of the following? (tick all that apply)	Possible HSE Category
Excessive demands of the job - feeling overworked	67.0% Demands
Inter-personal relationships at work inc. bullying / harassment	29.6% Relationships
Lack of control to plan your own work / workload	29.7% Control
Lack of support from colleagues	28.5% Support
Uncertainty over your role at work	35.1% Role
Not feeling secure in your job	31.7% Change
Change within your organisation	48.4% Change
Fear of physical / verbal abuse	10.8% Relationships
Ability to take suitable breaks from work (inc. toilet breaks)	9.2% Control
Expectation to be "always available" to employers	26.3% Demands
Low pay / making financial ends meet	29.5% Demands
Work / life balance	39.1% Demands
Other (please specify)	11.7%
Total respondents	9,276

Case Study 1

Jayne worked in a large university hospital. Through her work as a branch safety officer she heard that stress in the workplace was a particular concern.

Jayne wanted to tackle this problem. She became aware of a mental health awareness campaign "Time to talk, time to change" supported by MIND - the mental health charity. The aim of the national campaign is to end mental health discrimination and to promote fair treatment for everyone at work.

Jayne decided to work alongside safety reps from other trade unions and jointly approach her employer to implement the campaign to target the workplace as a whole.

The issues were raised at a meeting with the employer, who gave a commitment to tackle the issue.

So what changed?

A programme of monthly "time to talk" days gave the staff an outlet to de-stress – these are time-sponsored (paid for) by the employer, so there is no fear of losing pay to attend, and a phone a friend support system was also set up

A new workplace stress policy was devised, including an organisational time to talk pledge, and a Time to Change working group implemented to plan a strategic approach. This was an approach that included representatives from all levels of the organisation.

Sickness absence management was reviewed and an HSE staff stress indicator survey conducted to look at where support was needed most.

Employer Engagement

Some employers are reluctant to recognise stress as a work issue and will often find ways not to acknowledge the problems that exist. There are occasions when employers may want to ignore work-related stress and make excuses like “there is no stress here – people are bringing their stressful home lives into work – not the other way round”.

Employers may try to say that individuals dealing with stress in their personal lives, for example those dealing with bereavement, relationship breakdown or financial problems are bringing their own stress to work.

Employers need to recognise that the workplace can bring its own unique stressors – like inflexibility of work patterns or time off for appointments, or job insecurity leading to not knowing if the bills can get paid, or exposure to the six stressors, such as too much work, a lack of control or bullying and harassment.

Getting employers to recognise that stress is a ‘live’ issue is key to tackling the hazard – so it is important to get them on board.

Getting Employers to ‘Know It’

Some employers already recognise that stress is an issue at work.

However, not all employers do. The UNISON Employer Commitment Checklist should be used to support branches in discussions with their employers about recognising the problems of stress in the workplace.

Please see the resources section for further information.

Employee Engagement

Many employees will feel stressed at work at some point. Workers suffering or observing stress at work may be willing to share experiences or get involved and share their concerns. However, some staff may feel unable to come forward, especially if they are unsure of the consequences for their job if they admit stress is having an impact on their work performance.

In order to feel able to highlight problems with their employer, employees need to know that they will not suffer negatively as a result. Part of the role of the health and safety activist is to ensure that employers create an environment where employees feel able to raise concerns in a supportive environment and not feel that they are to blame. It is crucial that this is achieved.

If employers are not prepared to acknowledge stress as an issue, then trade union safety reps can still support workers to talk about the problems they are experiencing and provide them with more information on tackling the hazard.

Confidentiality is key at this stage. If members are unable to communicate with their employer, they need to know that they can get support from their trade union and not fear any reprisals. Creating this opportunity will ensure maximum participation from members and from others in the workplace who may have similar concerns. This also provides an opportunity to organise and recruit those who are not yet UNISON members.

Ways to engage employees:

- 1) Hold a union event where stress as a work hazard can be introduced, such as a bitesize awareness event. More information can be found in the resources section of this guide.

Think of the issues that concern the workforce the most in the workplace and try to build an activity around the issue. For instance, if employees are pressurised within the organisation to miss their breaks – then a lunchtime event where they have to break from work may be an idea.

Well-being initiatives – such as massages, yoga, healthy eating – are always a good way of getting people on board at work. It also gives you a chance to talk to colleagues and find out what is affecting their well-being and what they think can be done to put it right at work without saying the word ‘stress’.

These initiatives on their own will not solve stress in the workplace. However, they are a way that employees can express issues that they are facing in an accessible way. They provide an opportunity to talk and for safety reps and employers to listen.

- 2) Try to get some kind of anecdotal – but confidential – evidence that can be used when trying to build case for stress recognition at work. This can be done in a number of ways.

For example:

- a confidential electronic storage (such as a Dropbox or dedicated email address away from the employer’s IT network) where people can share their issues and concerns about stress and its triggers without fear of reprisal.
- a short survey around stress – maybe 5 or 6 questions – that may give you a better insight with which to support the case for better stress management and the use of the HSE stress indicator tool to define specific issues in the workplace.

The resources section of this toolkit contains a mini introductory stress survey that branches can use or adapt to their own requirements.

Data

There may already be information stored by your employer that could help to reveal if there is a problem with stress.

You may need to liaise with other departments in your workplace such as Human Resources. The type of data to examine includes sickness absence records. These records – specifically the recorded reasons for absence – could include depression or anxiety, and can indicate that stress is a problem at work.

If you feel that your organisation has a culture of fear surrounding stress at work you may also look at sickness absence records that have a recurring theme such as (non-specific) backache, migraines, stomach complaints or just general sickness. Although not directly stress-related, they could indicate other reasons why people are taking time off when they don’t want to disclose that stress is the cause.

Whilst looking at these records you may also look for particular departments that have high absence rates as this may indicate a problem within a particular team that may not be immediately apparent. For example, is there a department with a high sickness record (above the organisational norm)? Could this be a case of low morale in the team leading them to take time off?

Grievance records might also hold some information about conflict at work that may cause stress. Disciplinary or capability records may also provide some clues – for instance, capability records may indicate where someone is “at work” but not fulfilling their job role – for whatever reason.

It could be that they are unwell, suffering from stress, or that their head may be “elsewhere” due to other pressures. This is called presenteeism and can occur in times of austerity when people feel they must be at work for fear of losing their jobs.

Safety reps should be able to access these records as part of your trade union safety rep functions – check your rights as a safety rep.

The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health estimates presenteeism costs 1.8 times more than absenteeism.

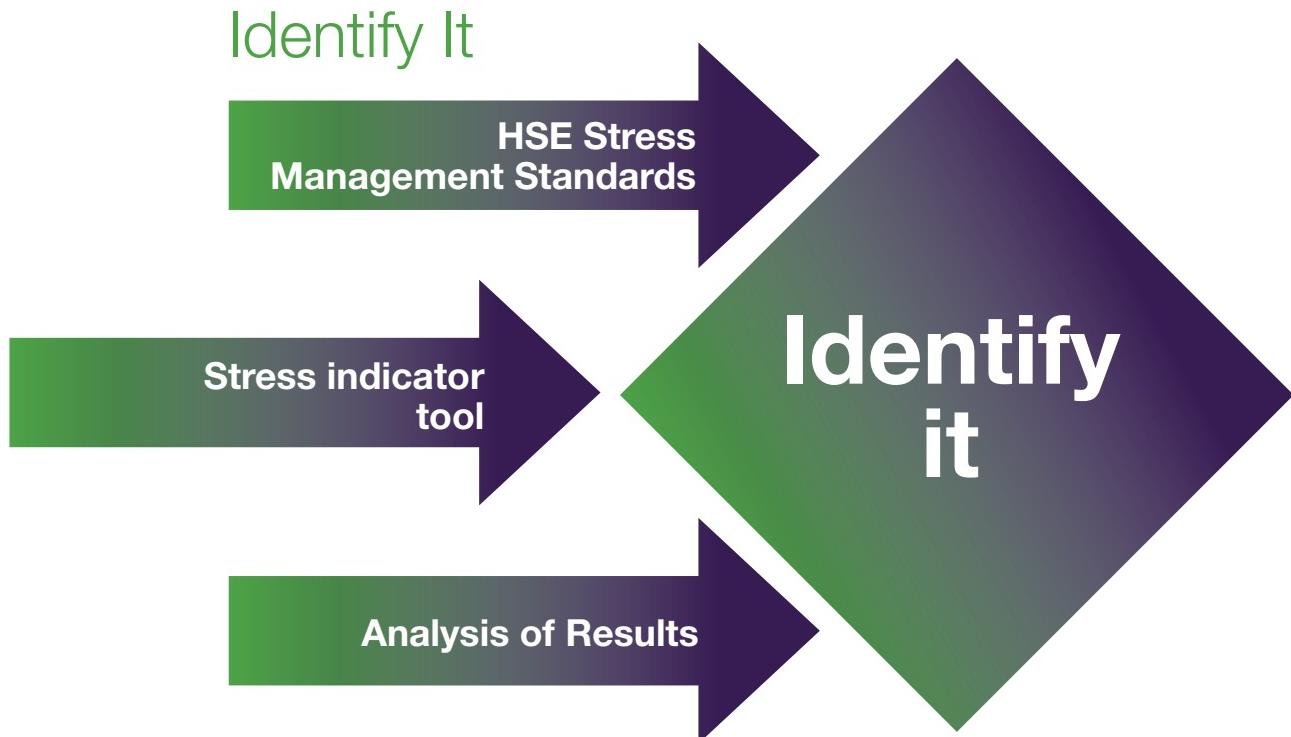
(*Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health: managing presenteeism: a discussion paper* - http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/pdfs/managing_presenteeism.pdf)

Next Steps

The legal rights and functions of safety reps can be found in the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee (SRSC) Regulations (also known as the Brown Book).

To get a full understanding of these please read the UNISON guide on the role of safety reps – see resources for a link to the UNISON guidance and to the TUC Brown Book.

If and when all of these areas have been explored, and perhaps data from the mini stress survey has been collated and analysed, you should be ready to go on to the next phase of the process – identifying what is causing stress in your workplace.



Every workplace is different, as is every employee – but the problems around the sources of stress that we face at work are very often similar. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has devised a set of distinct areas for the Stress Management Standards that if managed well, should minimise stress in the workplace.

The Stress Management Standards define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risks from work-related stress are being effectively managed and controlled.

The HSE Stress Management Standards

The Stress Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence.

These represent a set of conditions that, if present, reflect a high level of health well-being and organisational performance.

In other words, the six Stress Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work. (See page 6 for the six stress management standards)

The Stress Management Standards:

- demonstrate good practice through a step by step risk assessment approach;
- allow assessment of the current situation using surveys and other techniques;
- promote active discussion and working in partnership with employees to help decide on practical improvements that can be made;
- help simplify risk assessment for work-related stress by:
 - identifying the main risk factors for work-related stress;
 - helping employers focus on the underlying causes and their prevention; and
 - providing a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress.

(HSE 2017)

Does your employer know about the HSE Stress Management Standards approach?

In a recent survey of nearly 10,000 public sector workers, 60% said that their employers had not spoken to them about stress even though the Stress Management Standards were first launched in 2004. It is highly likely that most employers do know about the standards, but they have not spoken to their staff about how this approach can help reduce stress in the workplace.

What can we do?

It is the employer's responsibility to tackle stress identified as a work hazard. Since stress is identified by UNISON members as one of the key health and safety concerns, safety reps should raise this with employers as an area to tackle in partnership.

Safety reps should request discussion on the HSE Stress Management Standards with employers at local H&S committees.

What does the Health and Safety Executive say?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognises the importance of the Stress Management Standards and has a micro-site dedicated to this topic. Details of this can be found in the links section.

The HSE also has a host of resources to help guide safety reps through the process. Branch safety reps should check the resources and be aware of their approach to managing stress at work.

Key documents produced by the HSE to help activists kick start the process of managing stress include:

- **Securing Management Commitment** - this gives information on how to engage management to adopt the approach.
- **Tackling Stress Workbook** - the HSE workbook gives step-by-step

guidance on the Management Standards and includes helpful checklists

- **Is my Risk Assessment approach suitable and sufficient?** - this is a checklist for employers to see if there are weaknesses in the stress management approach they are using (if any). Safety reps should read this to establish if the risk assessment approach used by their employer is robust or needs review.

Next Steps

After securing management commitment to using this approach, and working through the risk assessment checklist with them to see if there are any gaps in their approach, the employer should be open to finding out where the specific areas of concern are regarding stress in the organisation.

Health and Safety Indicator Tool

The best way to find out what concerns are causing employees stress is to ask them.

As an addition to the Stress Management Standards, the HSE has devised a “stress indicator tool” that is used to identify the areas of most concern and which to prioritise.

Why use the HSE Indicator Tool?

The HSE indicator tool has been devised using the HSE’s expertise and is independent of any bias. Employers who raise some resistance to using this tool should be reminded that UNISON has no influence over the questions asked and that it is important to use the indicator tool in its entirety to analyse data effectively and objectively identify the areas of most concern.

Is there anything else that needs to be done?

There are various things to consider before using the stress indicator tool.

You will need to:

- Make sure that all branch safety reps are informed of the tool. Work with other trade unions to ensure that their safety reps are also included to help ensure that the tool is implemented.
- Decide (along with the Joint H&S committee) on the scope of the campaign and any additional information that may be requested.

Such as will this be an organisational wide survey or particular departments only? Will any additional questions be asked? If so – what will they be?

- Ensure there are adequate resources (people/time/expertise). If there is not sufficient resource in-house, would the organisation pay for independent support?
- Raise awareness of the process with members/non-members. There may be questions to be answered around data protection, for instance, will the responses be anonymous? This is very important as anonymity will ensure a better, more frank and honest response.

It may be an idea to hold some road shows to introduce the scope of the survey (department or organisation wide), the process, how it will be implemented and analysed, and what the next steps will be.

Please see the resources for top tips for employee engagement with the HSE tool.

Road show meetings could/should be held collaboratively with a management representative to show buy-in and commitment to tackling any issues/concerns that may arise.

Next Steps

Allow members/non members to raise concerns and for the working group to answer queries.

If your organisation has a website, a dedicated web page with FAQs will help the process along.

Have a provisional timeline proposed including launch date, duration, collations, analysis and first feedback point.

Have a second-stage timeline proposed including focus groups (ensuring confidentiality) or a second survey to drill down on issues once the preliminary audit has been completed.

Case Study 2– Part 1

Terry was appointed by the Joint Health and Safety Committee – which includes a strong trade union representation and had management support – to conduct a stress survey in a busy IT department of a London University.

The department of 75 staff had a sickness absence rate triple the organisational average and a high turnover rate. Anecdotally, morale was low and a culture of “banter” and weak management was having a detrimental effect on the IT department.

After discussing the task with the head of the department, agreeing the scope of the audit and the possibility of negative findings, the department head became supportive of the process and allocated resources and finances to investigate the causes and find solutions.

Terry then set about communicating with and holding preliminary meetings with staff members. Particular emphasis was placed on why a stress survey was being carried out, how the process would work, the confidentiality of responses and the support for the survey from management.

An offsite email address (not organisational) was set up so staff could ask questions of the process and gain any clarity required in a confidential way.

The survey was conducted using the HSE Stress Indicator Tool and achieved a response rate of 88%.

Findings pointed to relationships and demands being the main stressors. A report was written and presented to the joint committee. The departmental managers and the staff discussed the next steps.

Case Study 2– Part 2

Focus groups were then set up to discuss issues further and pinpoint exact causes. The focus groups were separated into supervisor groups and staff groups. The supervisor focus groups were well attended and very productive: structured questions were asked to try to further understand the issues. The staff focus groups were less well attended. This was found to be due to concerns about confidentiality and management “knowing” that they had spoken out. This was resolved by turning the structured questions into an online (secure) questionnaire. This gained a 78% response from applicable staff members.

Issues were:

- Banter and certain members of the team not understanding or appreciating the level of offence caused.
- Pressure – call centre staff under time pressure to answer calls.

These further findings were reported to all levels.

The action plan for improvement included the creation of a 'Dignity at Work Charter' and work rotas to relieve the stress of the call centre tasks.

Review dates and milestones were also documented to ensure compliance with the agreed action plan.

Analysis of Results

The Stress Indicator Tool is an Excel spreadsheet and some time and resources will need to be allocated to input information when the survey is done on hard copy – please see useful links.

If the survey is being used by a large organisation then a discussion should take place about the resources needed to undertake the survey. An external organisation could be considered to undertake this work to speed up the process.

The results will be grouped into 4 sections.

	Doing very well – need to maintain performance (represents 80th percentile or above)
	Good, but need for improvements (represents 50th to 80th percentile)
	Clear need for improvement (represents 20th to 50th percentile)
	Urgent action needed (represents 20th percentile or below)

Once results are in, decisions need to be made on which areas need further scrutiny.

Following the process set out in the Stress Indicator Tool User Manual will enable an analysis of the results. Please see the links section.

Reps will need to understand how best to interpret the results and negotiate with management to deal with the most pressing issues first.

Things to consider when analysing the results:

- Are there any areas of the organisation that are all affected by the same category in the same way? Positive or negative trends may indicate the overall culture of the organisation.
- Are there any areas that are individually affected by positive or negative results in one of the six categories? This could indicate an isolated area where further analysis could be warranted.

Focus should be put on both negative and positive results in order to give some balance to the impact on the organisation.

Looking at what is not going well will give the organisation some areas to improve on, but by also looking at the most positive results it gives the organisation somewhere to constructively build on best practice.

This will also help build confidence in the non-biased approach and not just appear to be an exercise in negativity.

Collaborative Working

It is important to keep the communication channels with members and non-members open and giving regular updates on the progress of the process is

a good way to do this. It also gives workers the opportunity to feed back and will ensure that safety reps are discussing the issues that really matter to their branch.

Engaging with members on this issue via newsletters, mini-meetings and social media updates will ensure that we are using the collective organising approach. This could also be a possible way to recruit new safety reps in workplaces where there is no-one doing the role or in an area that has been identified as having issues.

Branch safety reps should be working together with each other and any other trade union reps to put together a joint trade union response to the results, including looking at possible best practice and solutions to issues raised.

Example 1

	WP 1	WP 2	WP 3	WP 4	WP 5	WP 6
Demands						
Control						
Managers Support						
Peer Support						
Relationships						
Role						
Change						

Key

	Doing very well – need to maintain performance (represents 80th percentile or above)
	Good, but need for improvements (represents 50th to 80th percentile)
	Clear need for improvement (represents 20th to 50th percentile)
	Urgent action needed (represents 20th percentile or below)

Choose: 1 x (negative results)

1 x or (positive results)

Looking at results from the above example, the following areas could be prioritised for immediate investigation:

Roles in All Workplaces (negative result affecting all teams)

Why do employees in these areas feel unsure about their role?

Control in Workplace 2 (positive result affecting 2 teams)

What are they doing well so that employees feel they are in control of their workloads?

The next stage would be to look at the workplace issues that can arise from this further investigation



UNISON believes that stress is the single most concerning health and safety issue in the workplace in recent times. Employers must fulfil their legal duties and tackle the sources of stress at work.

Stress is a major cause of sickness absence in the workplace and costs over £5 billion a year in Great Britain. It affects individuals, their families and colleagues through its impact on their health, but it also affects employers by creating costs relating to sickness absence, replacement staff, lost production and increased accidents.

(HSE 2017)

Once steps have been made to identify the stress hazards at work, employers must risk-assess the significant hazards to ensure they are managed adequately and that employees' health, safety and well-being is not harmed by work.

Workplace Issues

The HSE groups stress into six categories – but under these categories will lay specific workplace issues. If you have focus groups on stress at work, any results from them will give a steer as to what priorities need to be addressed and some possible ways to tackle the problems identified.

UNISON produces guides to help safety reps in the workplace to support members. Guidance on employers' legal obligations and best practice can be found within the documents.

We have dedicated guides on Stress at Work, Risk Assessment, Bullying and Harassment and on organising and recruiting on health and safety in branches called Safety in Numbers.

These common workplace issues can be used as a recruitment and organising opportunity. Whilst going through this process with the organisation and holding road shows etc., reps and activists will have valuable contact with those who are not yet members and a chance to highlight the benefits of being a UNISON member.

Organisational Systems

Organisational systems already in place should be reviewed jointly at this point to ensure that they are fit for purpose and address the issues raised by the work done on the stress indicator survey. Branches should ensure that their safety reps are fully engaged in this process as safety reps are instrumental in ensuring workers' views are kept at the forefront of the discussions.

For instance, a review of the stress management policy will possibly require a working group. Who from the branch will represent and are they aware of the impacts of the survey so far?

Systems to review

Policies and Procedures:

- Stress
- Risk Assessment
- Flexible Working
- Bullying and Harassment
- Violence at Work
- Dignity at Work
- Managing Conflict at Work

Support Systems to review

- Occupational Health
- Employees Assistance Programme

Support and Review

It is vitally important that the UNISON branch and other joint trade unions and employers support the process going forward. The benefits of ongoing positive change for the employees and for the organisation should be promoted in order to keep up the momentum. Regular newsletters, joint statements and information bulletins could be used to show joint progress.

Review

As part of the initial action planning (at the “identify it” stage) review dates should have been proposed.

The following need to be considered as part of the review process.

- Have these review dates been met?
- Are there any other milestones to be aware of?
- What is the review process?
- Who is involved? (This should be at joint committee level at least.)
- Who is ensuring compliance with the action plan?

Although it is tempting, re-issuing the stress indicator tool should not be done in haste. Some of the actions from the original response will still be in the process of implementation. With this in mind and taking into account the time for analysis and other planning, best practice would be to re-run the original survey questions around 18 months – 2 years after the original survey.

This will give time for actions to be in place and have a positive effect before a full review takes place.

After review

Hopefully underperforming areas ( on indicator results) will have made some significant improvements and / areas (better performing) will have ‘spread’ across the organisation. (See example 1 on page 18 for indicator results).

The aim is to embed systems and changes in the organisation via collaborative working to improve the working lives of our members.

Joint ongoing reviews and action planning should deal with ongoing problem areas and should become part of the work culture.

This toolkit can be used time and time again, to guide you and other reps to a successful outcome on managing stress in the workplace.

UNISON takes your health and safety seriously and we are “Guarding Against Stress”.

Resources

Employer Commitment Checklist

1)	Yes ✓	Does your organisation have a Joint Health and Safety Committee or an H&S Joint Working Group?
	No Model Letter to request Joint H&S Committee	<p>Consider requesting the implementation of a health and safety committee with your employer (via HR or the H&S Department) or inclusion of trade union safety reps on the employer health and safety committee to make it joint.</p> <p>See resources for model letter.</p> <p>This letter should be discussed with the branch secretary and regional organiser before submitting to an employer.</p> <p>More info - http://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/howtosetup.htm</p>
2)	Yes ✓	<p>Has your employer ever spoken to you about stress?</p> <p>A recent survey of UNISON members said that 60% of their employers had not spoken to their staff about stress at work.</p>
	No	<p>Consider highlighting stress as a concern using HSE figures – available from www.hse.gov.uk/stress and averaging them to your population.</p> <p>i.e. if 2.3% of working population has suffered from work stress in the last 12 months, how many people would that equate to in your employer's population?</p>
3)	Yes ✓	Does your employer consider stress (including anxiety and depression) to be an issue within the organisation?
	No	<p>If not – why not</p> <p>Ask your employer to detail in writing the reasons why they do not consider stress to be an issue within the organisation. Ask your employer if they have any data that supports their assessment that stress is not an issue. If they have data, ask them to provide you with a copy so that you can undertake your own analysis.</p> <p>You could use the mini survey in resources for this.</p> <p>More information on sector specific stress statistics are available at www.hse.gov.uk/stress</p>
4)	Yes ✓	Are they prepared to work with UNISON safety reps to promote their work even further?
	No	<p>Explain that stress is increasing in the workplace and it would be rare to find a workplace free of the negative effects of workplace stress.</p> <p>Explain that the branch would like to take the issues forward (with or without employer support), but reiterate that a collaborative approach would work better.</p>

Model Letter 1 – Safety Committee Request

Dear (insert name of appropriate person – CEO etc.)

As an employer that recognises UNISON, we the undersigned safety representatives:

1) (Name of safety rep)

2) (Name of safety rep)

Would like to request the implementation of a Joint Health and Safety Committee to consider health and safety issues affecting or with the potential to affect the employees/our members.

As you may be aware, the law says that every employer who receives a written request from at least two safety reps must establish a safety committee within three months of the request.

The employer must:

- Consult with the safety reps making the request and with reps of any other recognised trade unions.
- Post a notice prominently, stating the composition of the committee and the work areas that it covers, which will usually include:
 - analysing injury and illness trends
 - reviewing accident and inspection reports
 - developing safety rules
 - reviewing safety training
 - advising on safety communications and publications.

With this in mind, I look forward to your positive response by:

(Three months from date).

Yours sincerely

1) (Name and signature of safety rep)

2) (Name and signature of safety rep)

Top Tips for Employee Engagement with the HSE Stress Indicator Tool

Negotiating

UNISON safety reps can negotiate with employers to ensure that members' views and needs are considered – for instance the need for confidentiality

Confidentiality

This will be essential to ensure maximum participation.

Approachability

Make sure that employees know who their UNISON safety rep is – and that you are taking this issue seriously. Discuss with the branch and region whether there is any current campaigning material available.

Honesty

Newsletters to members detailing what stress is – and what stress is not – and what approaches we can take together in the workplace.

Solidarity

Ensuring that members know that the issue is taken seriously by UNISON safety reps and that we are working together for the benefit of everyone to prevent work stress and support people who are currently suffering.

Understanding

It can be quite stressful for a member to acknowledge that their stress is a legitimate concern. Offering support through this will be part of the process.

Powerpoint presentation notes
reproduced below for an
Introductory Stress at Work event

Branches can also download the powerpoint at:
<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/10/Tackling-Stress-at-Work-PowerPoint-HD-TK.pdf>

Stress at Work

Know It
Identify It
Tackle It

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



What is Stress at Work

Work-related stress is defined as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”.

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



Stress at Work - the Causes

- long hours
- shiftwork
- unrealistic targets or deadlines
- too much or too little work
- lack of control and conflicting demands (especially among the lower grades)
- poor management
- bad relations with other work colleagues
- repetitive work, boredom and lack of job satisfaction

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



Stress at Work - the Causes

- working alone
- job insecurity
- job or organisational change
- low pay
- jobs with heavy emotional demands
- bullying, harassment and either actual or threatened violence
- a poor working environment (such as excessive noise, the presence of dangerous materials, overcrowding, poor facilities, or extremes of temperature or humidity)

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



Stress at Work - the Effects

- unusual tearfulness, irritability or aggression
- indecisiveness
- increased sickness absence
- poor timekeeping
- reduced performance, for example, an inability to concentrate
- overworking or failure to delegate
- anxiety
- depression
- panic attacks
- headaches

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



Stress at Work - the Effects

- changes in behaviour
- raised blood pressure
- indigestion
- muscle tension
- increased heart rate
- erosion of self-confidence
- relationship problems, for example, becoming withdrawn or argumentative with colleagues
- increased unwillingness to co-operate or accept advice
- excessive smoking or drinking
- drug abuse

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



Stress at Work - the Law

- Health and Safety at Work Act / Order – requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations - carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment
- HSE Stress Management Standards

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



What Employers Should Do

- talk to their staff about work-related stress and explain what areas they want to identify
- set up a working group to help (which includes trade union safety/ employee representatives, the unit health and safety officer, one or more supervisors or line managers, an HR representative and, where possible, someone from the occupational health service)
- explain that the first step is to undertake a risk assessment - a survey could be used for this purpose
- ask the group to assist in the assessment
- agree a realistic date when the key findings of the risk assessment will be available.

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



Stress Risk Assessment

- Step 1. Identify the hazards - what could cause harm and how?**
- Step 2. Decide who can be harmed - Identify people at risk who could be harmed, and how?
Is anyone particularly vulnerable?**
- Step 3. Evaluate the risks**
- Step 4. Record the main findings (and implement them!)**
- Step 5. Monitor and review the effectiveness of any control measures (revise them if necessary).**

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



HSE Stress Standards

- **Demands** - Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment
- **Control** - How much say the person has in the way they do their work
- **Support** - Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- **Relationships** - Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role** - Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles
- **Change** - How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



HSE Stress Indicator Tool

- 35 questions as a survey devised by the HSE without any trade union or employer bias
- Analysis of the results will give the stress working group the ability to direct resources to areas when problems arise
- Also gives pointers to good practice – so that the organisation can build on this
- Can be benchmarked via the HSE to other similar organisations

It is imperative that the working group ensures confidentiality and has committed resources to ensure that issues are identified and supported to a satisfactory conclusion

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



What Branches Can Do

- Having collected the information ensure the employer lets members know the outcome of the survey and report the outcomes to your health and safety committee.
- Ensure that the implementation of the HSE Standards in your workplace is a regular item on the Health and Safety Committee agenda. The findings will be an important tool in how management, in discussion with the Committee, carries out their own risk assessment and ensures the Standards are met.
- The Committee needs to establish a programme of work to implement the Standards. If such a committee does not exist then discussions directly with the employer will be needed. If your employer is uncooperative then raise with the HSE. The implementation of the standards is still a key HSE priority and they can help.

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



What Branches Can Do

- Talk with members about the way work can damage health
- Tackle management about their legal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of employees, including risk assessing and preventing hazards at work, and about the necessity of having a stress prevention policy.
- Help any member who is suffering from stress by getting as appropriate:
 - a review of the risk assessment for the job including
 - a change of, or changes in the job
 - more training and/or more support
 - more flexibility in how the job is done
 - access to independent counseling and representation at any disciplinary or dismissal procedure.

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



UNISON Stress Resources



Stock No. 1725



Stock No. 1351

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



HSE Stress Resources

All of the HSE's Stress resources can be found on the following webpage, including:

Support Documents

Advice on Organisational Responsibilities

Stress Indicator Tool

Stress Indicator Tool Guidelines

Benchmarking information

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

GUARDING AGAINST STRESS



Initial Stress Survey Questions

1) On a scale of 1 – 10 (where 1 is not stressed at all and 10 is extremely stressed), tell us where you think you fit. (Please circle a number).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2) Is your stress (Please tick a box)

Work-related Home-related A bit of both

3) In which areas do you feel stressed?

Please tick ALL that apply

	Work-related	Home-related
Demands		
Control		
Relationships		
Support		
Role		
Change		
Not Feeling Stressed		

4) Does your employer do anything to manage your work-related stress?

Yes No

**5) What – if anything – do they do to manage work-related stress?
(max 50 words)**

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6) What – if anything – would you like them to do manage work-related stress? (max 50 words)

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your contribution

Data Checklist

Records	Yes	No
Sickness Absence:		
Stress (work-related)		
Depression		
Anxiety		
Migraines/headaches		
Non-specific backache		
Stomach complaints		
General sickness		
Grievance:		
Bullying		
Harassment		
Misconduct		
Violent conduct		
Disciplinary/Capability		

Are there any recurring themes?

Yes No

If Yes – What/ Where?

.....

.....

.....

Are any departments/teams particularly affected?

Yes No

Are there any other anomalies to note?

Yes No

Useful links

UNISON Health and Safety Email

heathandsafety@unison.co.uk

UNISON Health and Safety Web

<https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety/>

Feeling the Pressure – UNISON Stress Survey Report 2017

https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/03/2017_UNISON_stress_survey.pdf

UNISON Stress at Work Guide

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/10/On-line-Catalogue227032.pdf>

UNISON Risk Assessment Guide

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/07/On-line-Catalogue221002.pdf>

UNISON Safety in Numbers Guide

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/01/23566.pdf>

UNISON Guide for UNISON Safety Representatives

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/08/23355.pdf>

UNISON Guide to the Six Pack Regulations

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/05/23568.pdf>

TUC Brown Book

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/BrownBook2015.pdf>

HSE Stress Micro-Site

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>

HSE Stress Indicator Tool

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/indicatortool.pdf>

HSE Stress Indicator Tool Manual

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/indicatortoolmanual.pdf>

HSE Stress Analysis Tool

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/analysis工具.xls>

Tackling Stress using the HSE Standards Approach

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wbk01.pdf>

